

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a foggy, winding road. On the left side of the road, there are several wooden utility poles with power lines stretching into the distance. A large, dark evergreen tree stands prominently on the right side of the road. The fog is thick, obscuring the background and creating a sense of depth. In the lower center of the page, there is a small inset image of a yellow school bus driving towards the viewer on the same road. The bus has "SCHOOL BUS" written on its front and its headlights are on.

CALIFORNIA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS

BASIC INFORMATION FOR PARENTS



THIS BROCHURE IS DESIGNED WITH THE PARENT IN MIND.

If your child attends one of California's public schools, this guide can help you with some of the basic information you need to know. It is intended as a general guideline to alert you to some important issues and to help you know what questions to ask.

The most important thing to remember is that each school district sets its own policies, based on state and federal law. To find out exactly what you need to know, contact the school district. If you are new to an area, contact the County Office of Education.

IMMIGRATION

All children who enroll in public school must be accepted. It is against the law to deny any child enrollment into public school based on immigration status. If you have questions, contact the district or the U.S. Department of Education.

If your child has special needs, contact the district for help in establishing an appropriate educational plan for your child. Special needs can include physical disabilities, speech or hearing impairments, emotional or behavioral problems or speech and language difficulties. If you think your child might need help, contact the district. If you have questions about what services are available, contact the California Department of Education, Special Education Division.

IMMUNIZATION At the time of enrollment, your child must be up-to-date on all required immunizations. All children entering kindergarten are required to have had the chicken pox vaccine. Requirements can change; contact your district for the current requirements.

Enrolling your child

in school is the first step. By the time your child is 4 years old, you should be in contact with your school district to find out what the requirements are for enrollment. In order to be enrolled into Kindergarten, your child must be 5 years old by December 2 of that school year.

When you enroll your child, you will be required to provide a legal birth certificate, up-to-date shot records and proof of your home address. If you do not live in the attendance area of the school you want your child to attend, you can enroll your child through Open Enrollment. Forms and brochures are available at any public school office.

ATTENDANCE For children to learn, they must be in school. However, you have the right to keep your child home when ill, or for whatever reason you feel it is necessary. The district cannot reduce your child's grades due to absence if the work that was missed is made up.

AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS Many parents work full-time and need before and after school care for their children. If you need care before or after school, the district can help you find what programs are available. Some schools have on-site educational or recreational programs.

FOOD PROGRAMS There are a number of state- and federally-funded food programs which provide breakfast, lunch and snacks. These programs are available to all children. Check with your school to find out what's available.

TESTING & ASSESSMENT Whether or not your child is meeting grade-level standards is determined through periodic testing, regular assessment and teacher judgement. To find out when and how your child is tested and what the standards are, contact the district.

SUPPLEMENTAL PROGRAMS are available to help your child keep up and meet grade-level standards. Ask the district about before and after school educational, tutoring and summer school programs.

PROMOTION & RETENTION

The law requires that all students meet certain grade-level standards before being promoted to the next grade. Students can be retained, or held back, if they have not achieved grade-level proficiency. Children at risk of retention are identified early in the school year. The parents are notified so that they can work with the teacher to come up with interventions, such as tutoring, before or after school programs or summer school, to help the child succeed. Contact your district to find out what the policies are for determining whether to retain or promote

HIGH SCHOOL EXIT EXAM Beginning in 2004, all high school seniors will be required to pass a high school exit exam in order to graduate. Students will be given a number of opportunities to take the exam prior to graduation. To find out more about the exam and when your child is eligible to begin taking it, contact the district.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE Children who are learning to speak English need extra help. Check with your district about tutors or mentors who can work with your child and your child's teacher.

FINANCIAL AID It is never too early to start thinking about how to pay for your child’s college. If your child is in high school, it is time to start checking into what kind of financial aid is available and whether your child might be eligible. Contact the district or your local community college financial aid office.

RESOURCES

U.S. Department of Education www.ed.gov
400 Maryland Avenue, SW 800.USA.LEARN
Washington, DC 20202-0498 [800.872.5327]

California Department of Education www.cde.ca.gov
1430 N Street 916.319.0800
Sacramento, CA 95814

California Department of Health Services
Office of Vital Records www.dhs.ca.gov/chs/ovr
[for copies of birth records] select “services”
MS5103, P.O. Box 997410 916.445.2684
Sacramento, CA 95899-7410

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